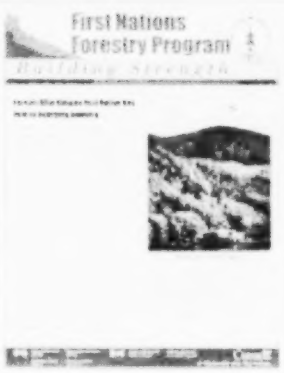
the Bridge

NEWSLETTER of the BRITISH COLUMBIA
FIRST NATIONS FORESTRY PROGRAM

Building Strength - through capacity, partnerships & business development

The purpose of the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) is to improve economic conditions in status First Nations communities with full consideration of the principles of sustainable forest management. Forest based activities on and off reserve is expected to provide initial economic opportunities for First Nations communities. Designed to assist First Nations to build capacity in managing forest resources on reserve lands, the program is available to assist with joint ventures and partnerships, and to promote economic development opportunities. The program works in partnership with First Nations in developing forestry skills and capacity.

Forests in reserve communities, coupled with business opportunities, offer a foundation for self-sufficiency through economic development. Proper management and development of these forest resources can assist First Nations communities in establishing technical and business expertise. Sustainable forestry can also provide the basis for partnerships with government, industry and other private sector organizations for forest-based economic development.



To illustrate examples of First Nations building capacity in forest management and business development, the FNFP has introduced a series of articles profiling First Nations initiatives. These articles, referred to as "Building Strength", describe program-funded projects in building capacity, building partnerships and in building businesses. The first series have been produced and will be distributed through the program mailing list. The articles are only a sample of the projects funded under the FNFP and show the diversity of First Nations initiatives in Building Strength in forestry through capacity, partnerships and business development. Current and future copies of the Building Strength series can be obtained from the Canadian Forest Service in Victoria.

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March 1999

Canada

GITXSAN FIRST NATION - Strategic Watershed Analysis Team

Developing a standardized wild to RIC - Resource Inventory

The Strategic Watershed Analysis Team, or SWAT, is the lands and resources planning agency for the Gitxsan Nation. Its mandate is to design and deliver projects that satisfy the information requirements for the Gitxsan people while also building the capacities for carrying out those projects within the Gitxsan Nation.

For some time now, SWAT has been focussed on a single project examining wildlife inventory and habitat assessment. Draft methodologies for recording this information have been designed by biologist David Hatler for "Inventorying the Distribution and Relative Abundance of a General Level of Biodiversity," and are currently close to receiving acceptance by the Resource Inventory Committee (RIC), the provincial body responsible for maintaining inventory standards.

This part of the project grew out of the desire to see the slow and potentially inaccurate manual method of recording field data on paper forms replaced by direct electronic data capture using global positioning systems (GPS) and geographic information systems (GIS) technology. "We always knew that the manual methods needed to be updated," explains SWAT Land and Resource Planner Russell Collier. "With Dave Hatler's encouragement, we began developing a prototype that was responsive to both his needs and ours, in order to move digital data efficiently from a field unit to our GIS software and databases."

The development of a system of integration tools for GPS-based field data collection of wildlife inventories compatible with BC's RIC standards, while training staff in its use and in operational work, is expected to lead to an expansion of business opportunities for SWAT. This development and testing work was initiated with funds received from the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) and the Vancouver Foundation.

It was quickly discovered that the intended use of bar code technology was severely limited given field data collection conditions. Smearing and the inability of the bar code wand readers to interpret the "dirty" data hampered the codes' usefulness. However, personal data assistants (PDA's), in this case the Apple Newton MessagePad, were found to be a useful solution to the problem. Adding the commercially available FieldWorker Pro software package enhanced the solution.

Through the summer and fall of 1998, four drafts of the prototype were developed and tested. The initial draft was basically an electronic copy of the paper form. Versions two and three attempted to list all possible wildlife species on menus in the software. The final version contained all the requisite fields for observational data, but they were left blank in the PDA. As each new observation was made, the operator could then enter any new species encountered into the list. "This gave us the unexpected benefit of being able to generate a list of only those species encountered on each transect," explained Collier.

Field-testing was carried out in two different locations for 10 days and 13 days respectively. The first test was under extreme geographic and weather

life inventory methodology Committee standards

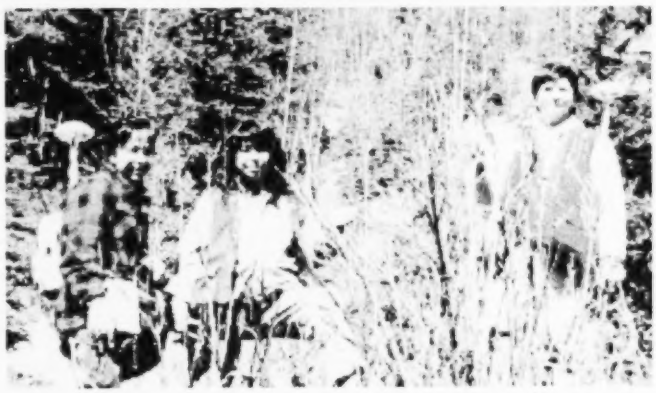
conditions (with considerable rain). In spite of the conditions, the crews managed to learn to use the PDA's and the GPS units together. "After they became familiar with the system, field operators found that they could enter data as quickly as on paper," noted Russell. "This took 2-3 days in all, which is not bad."

In the second test, it was discovered that the PDA's slowed down considerably in cold weather, becoming inoperable at temperatures below about 5°C. They also proved not to be waterproof. Under these conditions, data was collected on paper, and transferred to the PDA's each evening. Once in the office, the data was then easily and quickly downloaded in a variety of formats that can be handled by GIS and database software alike.

What did the project accomplish? SWAT has now developed a system of GPS-based field data collection that is compatible with provincial RIC standards, while training staff to use and train others with the prototype. Business opportunities for the Gitxsan Nation have expanded significantly through this work. They also have the ability to provide high quality, state-of-the-art inventories to a broad range of clients and agencies within BC. Through their extensive understanding of the software technology and existing contacts in Central and South America and Southeast Asia, there may also be a chance to work with a Spanish version of the software as well as other hardware platforms such as Palm Top PC's.

Russell puts it in perspective: "We're very pleased with how well this has gone, but it's not gone easily by accident. We had a very good idea of what we wanted, based on real-world collection needs. We had already solicited requirements from our own field team, and from other experts. We learned a lot about designing and testing new systems from this project, and we would like to explore other creative methods of enhancing First Nations' abilities to work out on our traditional territories."

For information: Russell Collier, Lands and Resources Planner (250) 842-6511



TSLEIL-WAUTUTH FIRST NATION

An Ecotourism Feasibility Stud Resource Management Option

The Tsleil-Waututh First Nation lives on an urbanized reserve in North Vancouver, but also has a small reserve located at the head of Burrard Inlet at the mouth of the Indian River. In 1997, the community participated in a Forest Renewal BC-funded Forest Sector Opportunity Identification Plan which has resulted in the development of a long- and short-term strategic direction for the community's increased involvement in forestry. The First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) is now helping them move ahead.

The Indian River watershed remains in a relatively undiscovered state, even though it is located within 16 km of metropolitan Vancouver. The potential for various ecotourism activities associated with this part of the Tsleil-Waututh traditional territory was identified in the 1997 study. "This watershed has been used from time immemorial by members of successive generations of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation," explains Chief Leonard George. "We want to provide for the stewardship of all natural resources within our traditional territory while allowing for the optimum social and economic benefits from the management and utilization of these resources consistent with our principles, goals and objectives."

The FNFP was asked to assist by funding a detailed feasibility study. The study was designed to characterize the ecotourism market in BC, outline the existing ecotourism products in their traditional territory, and provide a concept plan for the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation to follow in order to make use of their competitive advantages in several ecotourism niche markets. Implementation of this plan could then be carried out in phases over the next several years.

The study found a strong domestic and international demand exists for ecotourism-type vacations and adventures, especially where an aboriginal element can be incorporated into the experience. The Tsleil-Waututh traditional territory holds excellent potential for a diversified ecotourism industry because of its close location to the Vancouver urban setting, which draws large numbers of tourists. "First Nations in this province are only just beginning to awaken to the number of opportunities that ecotourism may hold," states Mya Sellgren, the report's author. "The Tsleil-Waututh First Nation can use ecotourism as a tool for preserving and maintaining cultural values, protecting important natural resources, and sustaining economic development needs."

The Indian River watershed is recognized as being among the most heavily impacted areas within BC, through historic logging practices, hydro transmission line construction, and other industrial activities. All have had a major impact on the environmental and economic health of the watershed and its resources. As a result, this particular watershed has been identified by the British Columbia government as being among the top ten priority areas requiring restoration.

The Tsleil-Waututh First Nation is developing a coordinated, cooperative and comprehensive watershed restoration initiative. Their ecotourism study identified several opportunities associated with activities in this valley. They also recognized the need for a modern definition of traditional First Nation's stewardship, based on

STONEY CREEK INDIAN BAND

Log Homes - B

Since the early 1990's the Stoney Creek Indian Band (Saik'uz First Nation), located 15 kilometres south-west of Vanderhoof, has been on a steady path of increasing their involvement in the forest industry. The accomplishments of the last few years demonstrate their success. They are a partner in a company, 'Dezti Wood Ltd.', which plans to operate a value added bed frame manufacturing plant in nearby Vanderhoof. In addition, the Band has its own forest woodlot license, and is also pursuing a 20-year forest license to secure a continuous log supply for a proposed sawmill.

In fact, when you speak with Chief Jackie Thomas, it is clear that the Band is playing an ever increasing and complicated role in local

ly May Lead to New and Economic Opportunities

a balanced perspective between economics and the environment while viewed through the First Nations unique historical and cultural point of view. They have proposed a "Stewardship Council", based on the input of all stakeholders, to be implemented as the resource management decision making process in the Indian River.

The results of the ecotourism study, along with similar studies on ecosystem-based forest and fisheries management, will be used to guide the deliberations of a select group of stakeholders and interested parties in the final design and implementation of the "Stewardship Council" model.

Chief George sums up the feeling of the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation when he says, "We believe that the watershed holds an enormous potential as an example of what First Nations, government, industry and community could accomplish by working together in a coordinated approach to renewal and stewardship."

This model may not be appropriate for all areas of BC nor is it the only option for the contemporary expression of First Nations' stewardship, but it is certainly an example that could be tried in other areas.

For information: Calvin George, Band Manager, (604) 929-3454

usiness Potential Plus Homes On-Reserve

forestry activities including logging, sawmilling and silviculture. As Chief Thomas explained, since their forestry activities are increasing in number and complexity, the Band created 'Tin Toh Forest Products Ltd.' specifically to manage the Band's increasingly complex forestry interests. Now the Band has its eye on another business opportunity: log cabin building.

In 1997, the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) provided funds to the Band to complete a general business plan in which various forestry business opportunities were identified ranging from silviculture and logging, to wood processing and manufacturing. From this initial general business plan the Band decided to focus upon the potential of developing a log home building company.

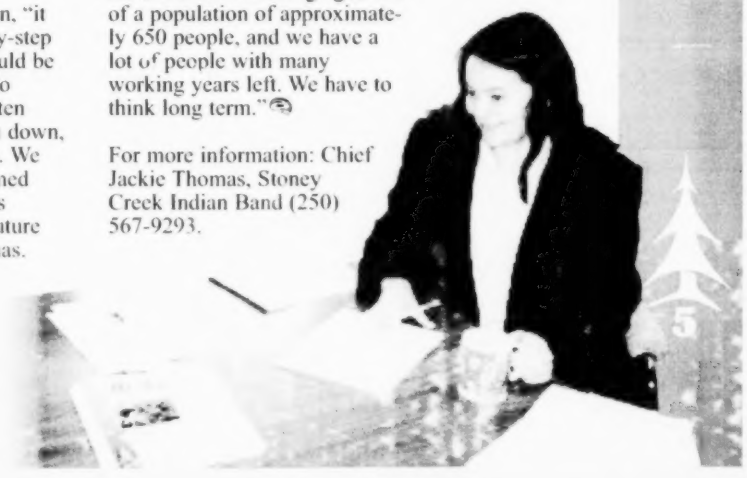
The following year, the FNFP funded the completion of a business plan to develop the Band-owned company. As Chief Thomas explains, "we knew we had a good supply of available logs, and regardless of the outside demand for log homes, there is an annual demand for log homes in the community, on this reserve, as well as on others. Therefore, if markets are good we can sell off-reserve, otherwise we can build homes in our community, for the community."

By having a business plan, "it gives us an actual step-by-step schedule of what we should be doing. Instead of trying to figure it out with no written plan, it is now all written down, and we can just follow it. We are not lost or overwhelmed with everything. It makes decision making in the future easier," says Chief Thomas.

With this information in hand the Saikuz First Nation is currently weighing their options and planning for the future.

Chief Thomas puts the issue of developing employment opportunities for band members into perspective by explaining that, "according to our Band statistics, 90% of our people have at least 20 working years left. Approximately 45% of our people are under 24 years old, and 45% are aged between 25 and 45 years. Therefore, there are about 300 working aged out of a population of approximately 650 people, and we have a lot of people with many working years left. We have to think long term."

For more information: Chief Jackie Thomas, Stoney Creek Indian Band (250) 567-9293.



Chief Jackie Thomas

HOMALCO FIRST NATION

Creating a New Consulting Company

John Blaney

Campbell River-area First Nation Forms a GIS Consulting Branch within their Development Corporation

The Homalco First Nation viewed Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology as crucial to the success of their treaty negotiations. Consequently, a GIS department was established in 1995 as a branch of their treaty office to supply the mapping requirements for their negotiation efforts. Equipment was purchased and band members were trained in GIS computer operations.

"We recognized that treaty negotiations are a finite activity," says Marguerite Parker, Homalco's Treaty Coordinator. "We decided that we had to establish some long-term goals for the GIS department and the members it employed."

Don McGillivray

The First Nation's long-term objective became the establishment of a fully independent, for-profit, GIS contracting business. That meant that the technicians had to make the transition from direct band employees to profit-making entrepreneurs.

First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) assistance was requested to address the short-term goals by funding on-the-job business skills training for band technicians. A non-First Nations individual with extensive experience in both GIS and consulting marketing was hired to act as a mentor for existing Homalco technicians through this transition period.

In the fall of 1998, the GIS department was established as the Technical Services Branch of the Band's business arm, "Bute Inlet Development Corporation". The Corporation's objective is to plan and carry out economic development activities for the benefit of members of the Homalco First Nation. "Social benefits and capacity building are emphasized," says Parker, "through activities in forestry and fisheries management, timber harvesting, and construction management in addition to the recently-added GIS services."

An active and extensive marketing program was designed and implemented. Over 120 marketing packages were prepared and included an introductory pamphlet outlining the services available. A website for the GIS Department was created, separate from the Band's website. The Technical Services Branch staff attended the First Nations Summit meeting in North Vancouver last Fall and received very favourable responses. The Department is continuing discussions with various forest companies that operate within the Homalco traditional territory. Local municipalities have been targeted (as heavy users of GIS services) as have other First Nation bands and organizations.

These initial efforts have resulted in the establishment of a working relationship with the Esketemic First Nation (formerly the Alkali Lake Band). The Technical Services Branch has been hired to provide GIS training to Esketemic band members, perform equipment maintenance and upgrading tasks and perform mapping services to the Esketemic Nation for their traditional territory.

The short-term goals of the project have been reached, and the Technical Services Branch is well on its way towards achieving its long-term objective. The most notable effect of this project has been the positive change of attitude within the department. Technicians John Blaney and Elliette Harry both agree. "We now have a greater idea of what it means to be a contractor," notes Elliette. "We are aware of the need to secure new clients and work as a team to satisfy their needs." John adds, "I can see the direct link between securing new work and my ongoing job!"

Perhaps Marguerite sums it up best. "As a for-profit company, the Technical Services Branch staff have control of their own livelihood. They are learning ways to be more cost effective and recognize the need to remain competitive. The next development stage for them will involve researching the viability of incorporating new technologies in their work."

For information: Marguerite Parker, Treaty Coordinator 250) 923-4979

Developing Technical Forestry Skills at the Band Level

The Adams Lake (C'Stalin) or Sexqeltqin People were named for their ancient headquarters on Adams lake. Traditionally the band was involved in both fishing and trading along the banks of the 'Little River', located between the Shuswap and Little Shuswap Lakes. Fishing the upper Adams River Sockeye Salmon run provided food plus a major trading item exchanged for meat, and other commodities over the years.

"The Adams Lake Indian Band has been involved in forestry since the turn of the century, providing a major source of income for many band members, for many years," says Dave Nordquist, Natural Resource Manager for the Adams Lake Indian Band.

Under previously funded Federal/Provincial Forestry Resource Development Agreements (FRDA's 1984-1995) the band was involved in forestry planning and silviculture activities on their reserve. When the new First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) was initiated in 1996, the band received funding support for forestry economic development activities, planning, and training.

"The FNFP had a positive impact. It has helped establish partnerships with local licensees, which have continued on after the FNFP project funding ended. The result was approximately doubling the number of jobs for logging, silviculture, riparian activities, etc. At least 10 new jobs were created," says Nordquist.

The band is currently exploring various forestry business development options along with training needs for it's members, timber supply requirements, and community strategic planning to ensure their activities are coordinated and flow according to their needs.

In 1998, the FNFP provided funding towards further training needs in global positioning systems (GPS) and silviculture surveys for local band members. This training has been completed, providing the trainees with an increased capacity to complete technical forestry field. "This training will increase their technical knowledge, which was lacking, and will increase their opportunities to do contracting work next year," says Nordquist.

For more information: Dave Nordquist, Natural Resources Manager, Adams Lake Indian Band (250) 679-8841.

Capacity Building in Forestry - Through Training

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The Sto:lo (a Halq'emeylem word meaning 'people of the river') Nation has 19 member communities located along the Fraser River, from Vancouver to points north and east of Hope. Traditionally, member communities have concentrated most of their efforts on economic activities such as the fisheries, however some bands had previously participated in forestry activities.

In November 1998, the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) provided funding support to the Sto:lo Tribal Council to deliver the workshop: "Aboriginal Businesses – Your Future In Forestry" to 35 individuals from member bands of the Sto:lo Nation.

Participants were provided with information and the tools to plan, develop and manage a small forestry related business.

"The general economic goal of the Sto:lo Nation is self sufficiency. This is driving everything. To maximize forest resource opportunities they need people with the technical capacity, and must be interested in moving towards self sufficiency," says James Atebe, Manager of Business Services, Sto:lo Nation.

The workshop was intended to encourage individual involvement by those with little experience or first hand knowledge of working in forestry or with operating a small business. The Sto:lo Nation has traditionally been involved in fisheries and other economic opportunities but typically has not been exposed to forestry opportunities.

"For this workshop we encouraged individuals, Sto:lo and other First Nations, employed or not, to attend in order to improve their self- employment initiatives in the forest sector," explains Atebe. "Also, many of the participants are young (between the ages of 18 and 22 years) and are part of a youth career development program. As such they are in the process of seeking a career, and exposure to opportunities in forestry," he added.

"The Sto:lo people have a passion for fishing – we would like to instill the same level of passion for forestry with individuals and the community. We believe this workshop was a success and has met its mandate to provide an introduction to forestry opportunities. It also provided basic business training required to startup and operate a small business in forestry (or other related field), to identify available funding and training opportunities, and to build attitude, confidence and networking required to be successful in future initiatives," Atebe explained.

Many comments were received from participants who attended the workshop including: "This workshop was awesome …great." Another wrote, "This business and planning workshop really helped me make a business plan outline, it will definitely help me in my future plans." And from another:

James Atebe

"I really enjoyed this workshop. I learned a lot from it."

As the Manager of Business Services explains in his summary of the training, "the resources, which the FNFP provided, have helped leverage and build the capacity to do something in the future. I saw a lot of smiles from those who attended this training. This was an enabling process that the First Nations Forestry Program brought to the community."

For more information: James Atebe, Manager, Business Advisory Services, Sto:lo Nation (604) 824-5218

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